

of snares laid by the Devil to divert his feet
 from Heaven
 to Hell: but Flaubert believed in neither.
 Nor was he
 filled, like Hardy or Anatole France, with a
 rage of pity
 by the cruelty of the Universe, or its utter
 injustice. True,
 at fifteen he had already written *Un Parfum*
a Sentir, the
 story of a good woman hunted to ruin and
 final suicide
 simply because she is ugly; and in a letter
 at the end of
 his life he writes: 'Anacharsis Cloots disait
 "J'e suis du
 parti de l'indignation". J'arrive a lui
 ressembler, ne
 trouvez-vous pas?' But on the whole, his
 view of life
 shows neither the noble indignation of
 Vigny nor the
 sorrow of Virgil for a suffering world.
 Indeed, his work
 is marred at times by a slightly sadistic love
 of pain and
 horrors, disguised as love of naked truth.
 What does
 obsess him, with alternate fury and
 fascination, is first the
 stupidity, secondly the hideousness, of
 existence. It is, in
 both ways, intellectually and physically, so
 inconceivably
 grotesque. It nauseates him; yet he cannot
 help returning
 to his vomit. 'L'indignation pour moi, c'est
 la broche
 qu'ont dans le cul les poupees, la broche
 que les fait tenir
 debout. Quand je ne serai plus indigne, je
 tomberai a
 plat.' There are times when he stands
 strangely close to
 Swift.

He has Swift's taste for the repulsive. Like
 everything
 else in Flaubert, this showed itself early.
 Even as a child
 he would climb up and peer through the
 window at the

corpses in the dissecting-theatre of his
father's hospital
By fifteen he had rediscovered for himself
Swift's horrible
sarcasm about the flayed woman: la plus
belle femme
n'est guere belle sur la table d'un
amphitheatre avec les
boyaux sur le nez, une jambe ecorch&, et
une moitie de
cigare eteint qui repose sur son pied'. If the
squalor is
heightened by contrast, so much die better
in his eyes; he
loved, on his Eastern journey, the
juxtaposition of golden